

A Safe & Satisfying Summer

Annada K. Das, MD, FACEP

Too much sun is not a good thing. Over-exposure can cause sunburn, heat exhaustion, dehydration or “sun stroke.” Heat-related problems can occur during long drives in a vehicle that is not air-conditioned, or while staying in a very hot apartment that lacks cooling ventilation, as well as under the sun on the beach. In very hot weather, significant fluid losses can occur through the skin without the sensation of sweating. Drinking adequate amounts of water and electrolyte fluid is extremely important to prevent heat-related problems.

Children, the elderly and obese are more prone to experience these disorders. If you or a loved one begins to sweat heavily, becomes fatigued, experiences headaches, muscle cramps, nausea, vomiting or dark urine, this is your body's way of alerting you that you need to be cooled and rehydrated immediately.

It is important to note that some remedies may not be helpful, but rather harmful. Over-heated individuals should not receive ordinary medicines used to lower temperature like aspirin or acetaminophen, and should not be given salt tablets, alcohol or caffeine.

Individuals who have fainted after exposure to sun or overheated apartments may require emergency care in a hospital. It is better to call 911 than to allow heatstroke to develop. Specially trained physicians will provide appropriate measures to reduce excess body heat and to correct electrolyte imbalances.

Drinking alcohol, wearing too much clothing, or taking certain medicines may predispose you to heat-related disorders. Individuals taking heart medicine like b-blockers or diuretics, or medications for emotional disorders should take extra precautions to avoid over-exposure to the sun.

When setting out for a day of vigorous exercise or sun bathing at the beach, wear loose-fitting and light-colored clothing. Sun glasses and a broad-brimmed hat are recommended as well. Bring plenty of fluids including water and “sports drinks.” Avoid the direct mid-day sun, but if you cannot, make sure to apply a sunscreen with a high UVA number for protection.

Make sure that children and pets are never left in a vehicle with the windows up during hot weather. Every year there are needless deaths because this important rule is not followed.

For those who must endure hot nights without air-conditioning, use lightweight cotton sheets, water bottles filled with ice-water can be comforting, and a fan will promote the evaporation of sweat and cool the skin surface. Drink more than usual, even during the night, make your bed as low as possible since heat rises, and consider a cool shower if a headache develops.

If all these measures fail, you may need to take advantage of the cooling centers that have been established in hospitals and other public facilities.

At New York Community Hospital, you will find good advice and expert care on heat-related disorders, or just an air-conditioned environment if you need to cool down.

About the author:



Annada K. DAS, M.D., FACEP, Director of Emergency Services at New York Community Hospital, is a board-certified specialist in Emergency Medicine, with over 30 years of experience. Uniquely qualified with both surgical and medical training, he has over 30 years

of emergency care experience in New York City hospitals, and he is well versed in the care of the stroke patient. Dr. Das's very busy department at New York Community Hospital boasts one the shortest waiting times in the region, and major changes, including the addition of rapid-triage, and urgent care, are now in progress to make the facility even more convenient and user-friendly.



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